

When a Christian Suffers Persecution - Part 1 - Acts 24:1 – January 10th, 2010

- By way of introduction, I think it's necessary to revisit what happened to Paul in chapter 23 so we can understand what's going on here.
- While in Jerusalem Paul had to be taken into protective custody because riots that were started by a mob who were plotting to kill him.
- The Lord has Paul's nephew hear about this plot and he takes it to the Roman commander who decides to get Paul out of Jerusalem.

- He has a military escort of 470 men rush Paul out of the city gates at 9:00 at night, and take him to Felix the governor of Caesarea.
- He also writes a letter informing Governor Felix of the plot to kill Paul, but that he rescued him after learning he was a Roman citizen.
- He writes that he had Paul brought to the Sanhedrin, but that there was no charge against him warranting death or imprisonment.
- He goes onto write that when he was informed about the plot to kill Paul, he sent him and his accusers to present their case.

- Then, when they arrive in Caesarea they deliver the letter and Paul to the governor who reads it but doesn't hear the case right away.
- Instead, he orders that Paul be sent to Herod's palace where he will wait until his accusers arrive, at which time his case will be heard.
- We pick it up in chapter 24 where the Apostle Paul has been waiting for five days to be tried for a crime that he is not guilty of.

- Paul is facing a false accusation, antagonistic opposition and relentless persecution by those whose sole goal is to rid the earth of him.
- We're about to see the Apostle rise from pages of this chapter and show us how to respond to what may in fact be coming our way.

- This is part one of a series I've titled; "When a Christian Suffers Persecution." If you think about it, there are some eerie parallels here.
- In other words, it is becoming increasingly more likely that we may come up against that which Paul is up against here. Consider this:
- Paul is on trial for being a Christian, and for sharing his Christian faith publicly. In other words, if you're a Christian, you're the enemy.

- We can learn from Paul as an example for us in how to respond instead of react, should the Lord tarry and we suffer persecution.
- You might say; "Well that's all fine and dandy, but what if we're raptured before anything like what happens to Paul happens to us?"
- That's great, let's go! However, I would rather be prepared and not have it happen, then have it happen and not be prepared.

- Also, the lesson we can learn from this chapter applies to all of us when we go through various trials and hardships in this life.
- That being said, let's look at the first way in which we can respond to whatever trial or persecution that may be coming our way.

1. Be courageous (Verse 1)

1 Five days later the high priest Ananias went down to Caesarea with some of the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus, and they brought their charges against Paul before the governor.

- v1 After five days, the high priest Ananias, the elders and a lawyer named Tertullus go to Caesarea bringing their charges against Paul.
- It's interesting that Ananias the high priest makes this trip along with some elders and this high powered attorney named Tertullus.
- This would seem to indicate not only the hate that they had for Paul, but also the mission that they were on in order to get rid of Paul.

One commentator said it this way; "Paul had been in Caesarea for five days, when one of the most famous lawyers of his time, an eloquent speaker named Tertullus, arrived from Jerusalem to argue against him. It is interesting to me that Ananias made the journey along with Tertullus. At this point, Ananias was eighty years old, and the trip from Jerusalem to Caesarea was an arduous sixty-mile journey. For Ananias to make such a difficult trip at his age to see Paul go on trial before Felix speaks to me of the great degree of animosity he felt in his heart toward Paul."

- Imagine the scene with this dream team. Surely the beloved Apostle Paul doesn't stand a chance up against such powerful adversaries.
- You would think that Paul is shaking in his boots at the site of this prosecuting attorney, thinking to himself, "this must be how it ends."
- Actually, Paul isn't really moved by this display of pomp and piety. You won't find concern in Paul you will however find courage in Paul.
- Paul isn't being courageous because that's just who he is, he is being courageous because of Who God is and what God has promised.

Acts 23:11 The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome." NIV

Joshua 1:1-9 1 After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: 2 "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites. 3 I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. 4 Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates—all the Hittite country—to the Great Sea on the west. 5 No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you. 6 "Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go." NIV